



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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Project to Preserve Clean Water for the Everglades Moves Forward with Key Agreement

State-federal partnership action means construction can begin on vital restoration project



(Click on the picture for a larger version.)

West Palm Beach, FL — The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Governing Board took action today in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to clear the way for the start of construction on a project to retain clean water and improve habitat in the 221-square-mile Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge.

The Site 1 Impoundment Project (Fran Reich Preserve) will capture and store stormwater that would otherwise be lost to tide for use during dry times, preserving clean water in and lessening demands on the Refuge along with related environmental benefits. Located in southeast Palm Beach County, the project involves construction of an approximately 1,600-acre, 8-foot deep, aboveground impoundment and a pump station.

“Clean water is a key to Everglades restoration,” said SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Eric Buermann. “Projects that focus on improving water quality such as the Site 1 Impoundment are the tools that will help us achieve restoration goals.”

The Governing Board approved in May and signed today a Project Partnership Agreement that is a necessary step for the Corps to start work on the Site 1 Impoundment, a component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). SFWMD Governing Board Chairman Buermann and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District Commander, Jacksonville District, Col. Alfred A. Pantano Jr., signed the agreement.

The agreement spells out the terms and conditions of the project’s construction. The Corps is responsible for contracting for construction of the impoundment. Phase 1 is scheduled to begin in September 2010 and will strengthen and enhance the structural integrity of the L-40 levee. Under a separate and pending Project Partnership Agreement, completion of Phase 2 of the project will achieve dam safety standards.

“The Site 1 Impoundment will be used to capture and store stormwater runoff during wet times instead of discharging it to the Intracoastal Waterway, then release water during dry times when it is needed to provide groundwater recharge and avoid saltwater intrusion,” said Kenneth Ammon, P.E., SFWMD Deputy Executive Director - Everglades Restoration and Capital Projects. “This will reduce the need to remove clean water from the Refuge for water supply and allow that water to remain in the Refuge and flow south.”

Once complete, the project will bring several benefits to the Everglades and local communities, including:

- Maintaining water levels in the Refuge to improve habitat for native plants and animals. The ecosystem is home to the American alligator, the critically endangered Everglades snail kite and as many as 257 species of birds that may use the Refuge's diverse wetland habitats.
- Capturing and storing excess surface water runoff from the Hillsboro Watershed.
- Reducing dry season demands on water from the Refuge and Lake Okeechobee.
- Improving quantity, quality and timing of freshwater flows to the estuarine portion of the Hillsboro Canal.

The District acquired the approximately 1,800 acres needed for the project through a 50-50 cost share grant agreement with the U.S. Department of the Interior. The total investment for these lands was approximately \$8.4 million. The estimated amount to be invested in construction is \$118 million, including the costs of land acquisition. Federal funding for Phase 1 construction was invested through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act passed by Congress in 2009.

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan is a framework for restoring, protecting and preserving the water resources of central and southern Florida. CERP is a 50-50 partnership between the State of Florida and the federal government. The State of Florida and the South

Florida Water Management District have invested approximately \$2.4 billion toward this effort, including approximately \$300 million in construction. Through March 31, 2010, 60 percent — or approximately 233,277 acres — of the estimated lands needed to implement CERP have been acquired.

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About the South Florida Water Management District

The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state — 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.

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